

Canadians relish time in the sun

Travis Meyn | 29th January 2011



Canadian swim team members, from left, MacKenzie Downing, Blake Worslep, Julia Wilkinson, Ryan Cochrane, Hilary Caldwell, Stephanie Horner and Stefan Hirinak, are enjoying their time on the Sunshine Coast.

CADE MOONEY

A MONTH on the Sunshine Coast was just what the doctor ordered for the Canadian swimming stars.

The Olympic and Commonwealth Games medallists are spending four weeks on the Coast training at Caloundra Aquatic Lifestyle Centre with head coach John Wallace.

It is a welcome change for the seven fish, who have escaped their homeland's sub-zero winter temperatures for the sun, sand and sweltering Queensland days.

Randy Bennett, Canada's Commonwealth Games, Pan Pacific and World Championships coach, said the Coast had provided the perfect training base for his squad.

"Part of the preparation strategy for the 2012 Olympics is to come here (Queensland) every winter for four to five weeks," he said.

"Last year was the Gold Coast, but it wasn't exactly what I wanted.

"I had been to the Sunshine Coast before and really liked the area. John got us an appropriate pool space and it's worked well.

"This is the situation I've been looking for. The pool's great, community's fantastic and everything's been first class."

Heading the squad are stars Ryan Cochrane and Julia Wilkinson.

Cochrane won bronze at the 2008 Beijing Olympics and backed it up with gold at the Delhi Commonwealth Games, and Wilkinson claimed three bronze medals in India last year.

Bennett said he and Wallace, whose daughter Tessa won silver at Delhi, had been bouncing ideas off each other.

"I think that coaches typically are pretty good with sharing information," he said.

"I've had some good discussions with John and will continue to while we're here. He's a very smart man and has been quite helpful."

After seeing the Queensland floods crisis sweep through the state, the squad decided to do its part in fundraising.

It is hosting a clinic on February 5 at the Caloundra centre, with all proceeds going to the flood appeal. The 90-minute session will cost swimmers \$20 and the Canadians will teach different aspects of the sport.

The squad will head to Sydney on February 10 to contest a few meets before returning to Canada.